On the False Prognostication Of the Flood

By

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An English Translation

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AGOSTINO NIFO, Philosopher of Sessa,

On the False Prognostication of the Flood

Which was Spread Abroad

from the Conjunction of All the Planets,

which will happen in Pisces

in the Year 1524.

Three Books.

To Charles the First [Fifth],

by the Divine Spirit's Inspiration

Caesar,

Ever

Augustus.

The kings of the Arthurians, according to Amieus the author, no one could greet without a gift.

Most glorious Emperor, when I consider the great hope of your virtues, the renowned line of so many of your Caesars, which cannot but exude Caesar-like magnanimity, the other gifts of nature, such as your lofty intellect, the beauty of your body, the highest (as they say) charm, piety, and habits of life, by which, among the princes of our age, I hear you are especially distinguished – your election to the summit of the Empire was inspired by the divine spirit – I cannot by any means be brought not to love, venerate, and adore you.

But lest I come to you without a gift, or, as they say, with empty hands, should I be about to adore Your Highness, I dedicate to you a little book which I have titled *On the False Prognostication of the Flood*.

The author of the *Ephemerides* [Johannes Stöffler], in the chart of the year 1524, from the conjunction of all the planets (which occurs in that year in Pisces), predicted to nearly the entire world – regions, kingdoms, estates, dignities, beasts, sea creatures, and all things born of the earth – an undeniable change, variation, and alteration. Indeed, such a one as has scarcely been perceived for many centuries by historians or elders.

There spread from the mouths of the people a prophecy of a coming Flood. This has so terrified the whole world that for many (even for excellent men) life will prove wretched until that year [1524] has passed.

Some have decided to climb high mountains, others to build arks or ships, others still to construct machines, so that they might be saved from so great a Flood. To free people from so grave a fear, I have composed this little book, which I dedicate to your Highness, so that in the universal joy of all mankind, which all celebrate in

your divine election, I might visit you, venerate you, adore you, and, as is fitting for a philosopher, rejoice with the others.

What is published (although never of little weight in itself) acquires some authority when dedicated to so great a man. Receive therefore with a calm hand, O most invincible Caesar, this little labour of mine.

May Your Highness fare well and be happy for a long time.

Book One

Chapter One

Common Opinion from the Conjunction of the Planets in Pisces about the Future Flood

The common opinion concerning the future Flood arose from the conjunction of all the planets in Pisces, and from the words of the author of the *Ephemerides* [Johannes Stöffler]. When he asserted that sixteen of those conjunctions would possess a watery sign, the common opinion arose that they portended a flood. A change common to all mortals cannot occur unless it be either a cataclysm or a conflagration. Since from that conjunction the author asserted that a common change will happen to all, it must be either a cataclysm or a conflagration.

The author indicated the change to be such as our ancestors never recorded. Therefore, it will be a flood greater than the Noachian Flood, or a conflagration greater than that of Phaethon.

Thus the prophecy of a future Flood has been spread abroad.

Chapter Two

Astronomical Arguments for that Common Prophecy of the Future Flood

Many arguments can be made for this common opinion:

First, because great effects come from great causes. A cataclysm or conflagration is the greatest of all effects, and the relevant conjunction is the greatest of all celestial causes. From that conjunction no effect arises except one.

That a cataclysm or conflagration is the greatest of all effects is clear, because it is a change by which all mortal things are changed. That such a conjunction of the planets is the greatest is proven first because in it are the greatest planets, namely Saturn and Jupiter; secondly, because the other planets are at least mixed in by conjunction. Therefore, if the conjunction of two is great, the conjunction of all will be the greatest. Furthermore, the conjunction of the planets is the cause of generation and corruption, as Ptolemy says in the *Centiloquium*. The greatest conjunction, such as never was before, will be the cause of the greatest generation and corruption, such as never were before. Such effects are none other than a flood and a conflagration.

The conjunction of planets signifies according to the sign in which it is found, as the author Albumasar says. Mashallah supports this in his book *On the Conjunctions.* He claims when the conjunction is in watery signs, it signifies loss by rains and abundance.

Experience supports also this, for as Albumasar asserts, the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Cancer preceded the Flood by two hundred and eighty-seven years, and signified a flood. Cancer is a watery sign and of the watery triplicity. By similar reasoning Pisces, of the same watery triplicity, will signify likewise.

To these is added the authority of all who have written about changes in the air. The conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in fiery signs signifies great droughts.

But in wet signs there occur continuous inundations of waters and regional floods. Particular floods occur, as Aristotle asserts at the end of the first book of the *Meteorology*. They occur not from the movement of the sun in the year, nor from the

movement of the moon in the month. Therefore, they occur from the movement of the other stars, which happen along with the movements of the sun or moon.

However, the force seems stronger when located in the conjunction of stars than in a single star alone. Therefore, floods seem more likely to proceed from the conjunction of stars than from a single star alone.

But a conjunction has no force except such as it has in the sign of the zodiac. Since Pisces is a watery sign, it will seem to portend great waters.

These are the astronomical arguments, gathered from other astronomers.

Chapter Three

The Strongest Argument from What Ptolemy Asserts for the Commonly Spread Prognostication about the Future Flood

Some people – sensibly – assert that a conjunction produces a weak effect unless eclipses support those conjunctions, as Ptolemy very clearly states. Therefore, we shall magnify the effect of these conjunctions if we carefully consider the lunar eclipse which will occur in the year 1523, on 25th August.

A terrifying one.

This eclipse precedes that conjunction, and indeed occurs in the same sign in which the conjunction is going to happen (in Pisces, and almost exactly so). Since, clearly, the effect of that eclipse endures until the time of the conjunctions, it follows that the effects of the conjunctions are to be considered not only great, but the greatest. They are strengthened by the inclusion of eclipses.

Whence the Arab interpreter of Ptolemy [Haly Avenrodan], in the second book of the *Apotelesmata*, says:

"When a great eclipse occurs, and along with it – or within the time period of its indications – there happens a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, the greatest effect will follow."

He gives the reason: from the power of the conjunction and from the power of the eclipse, comes a force greater than either power separately.

Therefore, since those conjunctions occur after the eclipse, and happen almost exactly in the same sign, and indeed within the time period of the eclipse's indications, and not far from their beginning, the greatest effect shall arise.

Since no other effect is apparent except a flood, the commonly spread prognostication about a future Flood is not unreasonable.

This argument, in my judgement, is the strongest.

Either the conjunctions of the stars exert, by themselves, the strongest forces, or they do by reason of eclipses.

If by themselves, then never have more planets been found in watery signs. They will accordingly exercise their greatest forces.

If by reason of eclipses, then two lunar eclipses have preceded them, the last of which is nearly exactly in conjunction with them. Then too they will possess powers strong in watery signs.

This, I judge, is the most compelling argument.

Chapter Four

A Mixed Argument from Theological Truth and Astronomical Truth for the Same Prognostication

Let us reason in mixture: partly from the assertions of theologians, partly from the assertions of astronomers, in support of this common opinion.

From the astronomers' side: it has been commonly stated in all astronomy that a flood never occurs without some celestial conjunction or disposition causing it. Aristotle supports this at the end of the first book of the *Meteorology*, when he asserts that a flood occurs whenever the same celestial force returns which had once caused a great winter.

Alexander of Aphrodisias, the excellent interpreter of Aristotle, asserts that that great winter happens when the time arrives appointed by fate, which has the power of producing winter.

Let us accept that a flood has never occurred without a constellation preceding it powerful enough to produce it. All who observe the outcomes of the stars have placed this constellation in watery signs. This we learn from the astronomers.

From the theologians, however, we learn:

First, that although divine power can act without the concurrence of secondary causes, it does not act in sublunar effects unless secondary causes cooperate in producing them. Especially when those secondary causes can cooperate in those sublunar effects. St Augustine does not deny this, and Albertus Magnus, in the book he wrote most diligently on the properties of the elements, also supports it.

Second, let us accept that the Flood occurred chiefly by God's will, because of the wickedness of men.

Hence Moses says in Genesis:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of His heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His

heart. And the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

And after a few lines:

And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before me…"

From all these things, it is clear that the wickedness of men was the cause of the Flood.

With this accepted, it is evident that a flood is going to happen. All the causes are present:

First of all, there has never been as much human wickedness as there is presently, or if there was, it was never greater. There are the tyrannical oppressions of rulers, utterly wicked governments, the rages of generals and rulers, unrestrained impulses, quarrels, contentions, most savage wars, tumults, seditions (both civil and military) and the most intemperate movements of souls: rapine, insults, outrages, murders, thefts, and deaths by the sword. There is incest, profanations of sacred things, the violation of freeborn women, and shameful plundering, the overthrowing of laws, and the terrible abuse of magistracy. Princes, and those who govern, deny justice, sell justice publicly, crush justice, and profane divine laws.

There are those who mock divine oracles and treat them as nothing; there are also those who fuck their sisters, their cousins, and their daughters. There are sins that have never before existed or have never seemed greater.

That human wickedness is present is clear; and that the celestial cause is also present is clear from astronomy.

If there is any cause of a flood, it can be none other than a celestial disposition in watery signs.

Such a one exists: for there is a conjunction of all the planets in a watery sign, strengthened likewise by a lunar eclipse. So precisely, that one may say: such an omen has never been, or at least never been greater.

From this, it is most powerfully seen that the Flood will occur. Not only by the strength of that conjunction, but also by the strength of human sin, which today is so apparent.

This must be judged.

This argument terrifies me.

It draws me in. It ensnares me. It completely convinces me.

Book Two

Prologue

Thus far we have spoken concerning the common opinion of the Flood; it remains that we refute it. For although we have provided the strongest arguments in favour of it, nevertheless it is not to be accepted as true. And if it were accepted as true, nevertheless we would free from terror those who dwell with us in the Italian region. But we will do so in an orderly fashion. First, we shall present the refutations of others; then, after they have been rebutted in their turn, we shall submit our own.

Chapter One

Arguments of certain persons against the false prognostication of a future Flood.

Against, the false prognostication of such a future Flood, there first arises an argument: that to the stars other than the sun and moon, little or nothing is to be attributed. Hence Aristotle, in the book on the signs of weather [*Meteorology*], says the greatest and most principal signs are from the sun and the moon. The moon, indeed, is like the sun by night.

Nor is this without reason: the stars act upon us through their lights; but through their motions only inasmuch as their light is conveyed to us through their motions. But we see, with respect to us, little or no light in the other stars – or not enough that our senses might receive change from them.

When Saturn rises in our hemisphere, we do not feel greater cold than before; nor, when Mars rises, do we feel greater heat. But when the sun rises, no one denies that we feel greater warmth than before. Likewise, when the moon rises, it is also evident that greater warmth arises. For we perceive that nights at full moon are warmer; at the new moon, less warm. This teaches us that stars other than the sun and moon were made more for decoration than for being causes of events.

From this, it is clear that this Flood-heralding conjunction means little or nothing – a Peripatetic argument. Theophrastus himself does not deny it: for if those stars do little or nothing, the conjunction does not seem so great as to cause a Flood.

A second argument arises: in every conjunction, whether of stars or luminaries, one must consider the nature of the stars in conjunction, both the wandering and the fixed ones. Also, the images rising with them, and how these proclaim things, as Ptolemy asserts in the *Tetrabiblos* [*Apotelesmata*]. We showed this in the first book concerning the causes of calamities.

Since in this conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces, Mars himself stands nearby – Mars everywhere increases heat and dryness – it follows that, at least by the impediment of Mars, a Flood does not fully follow from that conjunction. For Mars will diminish much of the humidity of that conjunction.

Chapter Two

The first argument is refuted, and it is explained how the other stars act.

The first argument seems altogether frivolous, if one were to remove all power from the stars, whether wandering or fixed.

Ptolemy, in the preface to the *Apotelesmata*, asserts there is power in the other stars.

When Mars is with the Sun in Cancer or Leo, Mars increases the summer heat beyond measure. But if Mars is with the Sun in Capricorn or Aquarius, he lessens the cold of winter to a great extent.

Likewise, if Saturn himself is with the Sun in Cancer or Leo, he considerably weakens the summer heat. But if Saturn is in Capricorn or Aquarius, he excessively increases the cold of winter. The same can be observed with the other planets.

This reasoning shows, just as the anonymous interpreter of Ptolemy says, that Mars heats and excites, and Saturn cools.

Moreover, in the first book of the *Apotelesmata*, Ptolemy investigates in another way whether the stars possess powers. He says:

"The powers are understood through observations concerning the configurations of the moon and sun. These configurations affect the condition of the surrounding region – some in one way, others in another – and they seem to affect it to a greater or lesser extent."

We see the qualities of the months are not always equal and uniform, but arise now in this way, now in that, from the lunar phases themselves. But since this difference cannot arise from the lunar phases, since they are all equal, it is believed to arise from the differing stars that govern them. But unless the stars have powers, and in fact differing ones, the diversity in the qualities of months cannot arise.

By similar reasoning, the same can be concluded from the variation of years, as Alexander of Aphrodisias asserts. Years are not all equal or similar. But the motion of the sun is always the same every year. Therefore, other stars have their own powers, apart from the qualities of the luminaries [i.e. Sun and Moon].

Whether these powers are present in the other stars only when the actions of the luminaries are presupposed, or in themselves independently, we have discussed most carefully in the book *On the Causes of Our Calamities*, chapter 4.

But for now, let what Ptolemy affirms in the *Centiloquium* suffice, when he says – do not overlook Aphorism 119 – that conjunctions contain the knowledge of the happenings of the world, both of generation and corruption. Ptolemy excludes from this number of conjunctions the syzygies of the luminaries, as we have shown in that book.

Upon the rising of Mars or Saturn on our horizon, we feel no change from either of them. This is a sign they are not of strong action. For when we are altered by a greater agent, we do not feel the alteration caused by a lesser one.

The way in which the alteration can be perceived has been laid out in many ways – either from the difference in the qualities of lunar phases, or from the difference of the time of year.

Thus, even if we have not perceived their alteration by that direct method, let it suffice that it can be perceived in another way.

Therefore, it is clear from these points that powers are present in the other stars.

Chapter Three

The second argument is refuted, and it is shown how Mars does not prevent a Flood, though he diminishes it.

The second argument against the false prognostication of a future Flood is weak.

For just as in the mixture of the elements, the dry tempers the wet, and the hot tempers the cold, so too in celestial mixture, a star by its own quality lessens the power of another star contrary to itself.

Mars, when joined with the Sun in Capricorn and Aquarius, diminishes winter; Saturn increases it.

If a future conjunction of stars in Pisces portends a flood, the inclusion of Mars will indicate one not so great, and not so widespread. Mars will reduce very much of its magnitude.

Whence also Ptolemy, in the *Apotelesmata*, says:

"Each wandering star, remaining in its own simplicity, will stir up what is proper to itself. But when mixed with another, either on account of configurations, or differing placements of signs, or applications to the Sun, it also receives a tempered mixture in its effects in proportion to the natures of those combining. Accordingly, it brings about a variation in the outcome."

This reasoning shows Mars does not entirely eliminate a future flood, but very much lessens its magnitude.

These arguments therefore – even if they lessen the Flood – do not entirely eliminate it.

Chapter Four

Aristotle's Argument, and those of the other Peripatetics, as well as of Moses, against the false prognostication of a future Flood.

What follows is a natural argument against this false prognostication of a Flood.

It must first be accepted: there is no rain unless there first occurs a diminution and drying-up of watery bodies.

Aristotle proves this from the fact that, unless vapours are lifted up and gathered into the middle region of the air, and indeed into the form of vaporous air, rain will never occur.

Vapours cannot be lifted unless watery bodies are converted into vapours. But where moist bodies are turned into vaporous air, it is necessary that they be diminished and dried out.

Therefore, if there is to be rain, it is necessary that a diminution and drying of watery bodies precede.

Hence, it secondly follows: the greater the rain is going to be, the longer and greater must be the diminution of moist and watery bodies beforehand. Indeed, a more powerful drying must occur on Earth.

Aristotle asserts in the second book of *Meteorology* that summer is dry because the sun, being near that region, draws vapours upwards and retains them above. Not in vapour form, but in air form, into which the vapours have been transformed. In winter, when the sun moves away from that region, the effect condenses that vaporous air and sends it down in the form of rain.

Experience confirms this: we see that after a dry year, a very rainy one follows, and after a rainy one, a dry one. Furthermore, after a dry autumn, a rainy winter follows, and vice versa. And generally, we always observe after one wet season, a dry one follows, and vice versa.

If a rainy season follows, a dry one must precede, and if a dry season follows, a wet one must come before. For when the moisture is drawn upwards, it returns downwards. Otherwise, the balance of the elements would not be preserved. And

likewise, moisture brought down must rise again. Nature cannot long endure inequality of the elements.

It is therefore evident there cannot be an excess of rainfall, unless an excess of dryness precedes, both in time and in magnitude.

This Aristotle and Alexander most clearly prove in the second book of *Meteorology*.

From this arises a natural, and indeed very strong, argument.

If there is going to be a Flood, and one in such excess as has never been reported by historians, then a drying and diminution of the waters as great as has scarcely been observed by historians or natural philosophers must precede.

We neither see such a drying now, nor do we perceive any coming one from the present constitution of the heavens. A heavenly configuration capable of producing such dryness could not exist except by a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in fiery signs, with Mars assisting, as Albumasar and Mashallah assert.

We see no such configuration approaching.

Hence, the statement of Moses.

In Genesis 9, God says: *"I will set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the Earth. And when I cover the sky with clouds, my bow shall appear in the clouds, and I will remember my covenant which I have made with you – that the waters shall no more become a Flood to destroy all flesh."*

On these words, the historian Peter Comestor writes that Noah, when he most feared the waters of the Flood might again overflow the Earth, prayed daily that God might not do this.

And as Flavius Josephus reports, the Lord made a covenant that He would no longer bring about a Flood, and set His bow in the clouds as a sign of that covenant, so that it might serve as a double sign:

(i) of the past judgement by water, *not to be feared*, and

(ii) of the future judgement by fire, *to be expected*.

The rainbow has chiefly two colours, and two principal natures:

(i) The blue, which is the sign of the watery nature;

(ii) The red, which is the sign of the fiery substance.

It is further handed down by the saints: *forty years before Judgement Day, the rainbow will not be seen*.

Because, as we said, a Flood cannot occur unless extreme dryness of the air has gone before. But where there is excessive dryness of air, the moisture from which the rainbow is formed fails. With that failing, no rainbow is formed.

If a powerful future Flood is to occur, it is necessary that no rainbow should appear for a long time before – for the part of the air from which the blue colour appears will have been destroyed.

Likewise, if a conflagration is to occur, it is necessary that great humidity precede. Where great humidity precedes in the air, the part of the rainbow from which the red colour arises is lacking.

Therefore, if such a vast and overwhelming Flood is to happen, the rainbow would not now be visible, nor for many years beforehand.

But we observe the opposite.

Therefore, the common prognostication of a future Flood is not supported by natural reasoning.

Chapter Five

This physical argument is refuted. How the sign taken from the rainbow is to be understood.

If, however, some natural philosopher should wish to defend a provincial flood, he ought to say this. The matter is different concerning the dryness that precedes a provincial flood, and different concerning the dryness that precedes a universal Flood.

A provincial flood can occur in some region in which no great dryness preceded.

First, because the heavenly configuration, which brings about a flood in that region, will condense the air of that region by its celestial coldness; in contrast, it will rarefy the air of other regions.

Therefore, in the case of a provincial flood, it is not necessary that dryness precede in the very region where the flood is to occur – but it is sufficient that dryness precede by rarefaction in other regions.

Furthermore, vapours may be gathered from other regions into that region in which the flood shall occur, by the power of the celestial configuration. Either on account of winds, or for other reasons.

Therefore, in a provincial flood, dryness indeed precedes, but not in the very region where the flood is going to occur.

But in a universal Flood, universal dryness must precede. From all terrestrial waters, the air must become vaporous if such an excess of rainfall is going to occur.

Therefore, universal dryness must come beforehand.

Diogenes and Anaximenes babble about this matter, when they claim that after a Flood of the whole earth, a drying of the whole follows, and vice versa – that after the drying of the whole, an inundation of the whole always occurs in turn.

Therefore, the physical argument eliminates the possibility of a universal Flood, but by no means the provincial one.

By a similar reasoning regarding the rainbow:

Before a universal Flood, the rainbow ought nowhere to appear, because of the universal lack of moisture;

But a provincial flood can still occur in some region where there is no need for moisture to be lacking, because it is not necessary for dryness to precede there, but rather in other regions.

This point is noted by the words of Divine Scripture:

"There shall not," it says, "be waters of a Flood again to destroy all flesh."

From which the sign is: that a provincial flood has indeed occurred more than once (as we shall say), but the rainbow has never failed to appear.

From this, the conclusion of the prophetic vision – that "the cataclysm is excluded" – must be understood as referring to a universal cataclysm.

Neither the physical argument nor the divine sign entirely exclude a future flood.

Chapter Six

Therefore, with those arguments completely refuted, for a true refutation of the future Flood, let us first adopt certain suppositions, which are propositions. From these we shall draw conclusions against the common prediction of the Flood.

Chapter Seven

First supposition: there are two types of flood, and each of them is twofold.

Let our first supposition, then, be (as if granted by all) that although a flood, properly speaking, is an excess of rain and an abundance of waters, by extended usage the word is sometimes accustomed to be taken for an excess of fire upon the earth, which is called conflagration, and sometimes for an excess of rains, which in Greek is called *cataclysmus*, in Latin *diluvium*.

Each of these is twofold:

One through the whole earth, universal, which the ancients called *mundial* and in Greek *kosmikon*;

The other provincial, which in Greek is *choristikon*, in Latin *particular*, according to a certain region of the earth.

Chapter Eight

That there has at some time been a Cataclysm and a Conflagration, and what sort they were. The second supposition.

The second supposition is that there has at some time been a Cataclysm, and at some time also a Conflagration.

That indeed a Cataclysm has at some time occurred, Aristotle grants in the *Book of Problems*, in the second book of the *Politics*, and in the *Book on the World* (*De Mundo*).

Plato affirms it more than once in the *Timaeus*, in the *Laws*, and elsewhere.

Aristotle, in the first book of the *Meteorology*, proves this as follows. He asserts that seas and rivers were formed from the remnants of floods, and that land is changed from dry ground to sea on account of the flood that occurs upon it. From the remnants of which, what was once dry is left as sea and river.

That this has at some time happened, the Peripatetics have affirmed, such as Theophrastus, Alexander, and Averroes.

Furthermore, the histories relate such events: both the one that occurred in Thessaly in the time of Deucalion and Pyrrha, and the one in Achaea and Boeotia under Ogyges, and many others besides, which historians have mentioned.

But that there has also at some time been a conflagration. Aristotle attests in the first book of the *Meteorology*, and in the *Book on the World*, regarding that burning which occurred under Phaethon. In the *Book on the World*, he (Aristotle) attests that it was not a fable, but a flame, made from the heavens, which burned the eastern parts.

Furthermore, in the first book of the *Meteorology*, he proves that some region can be so dried out and burned that it becomes utterly deserted.

Plato, moreover, in the *Timaeus*, seems to assert a conflagration on account of the wandering off-course (*exorbitationem*) of the Sun and Stars.

That a flood and conflagration have at some point occurred is clear from these things. But what kind of flood it was, and what sort of conflagration, we have from the sacred historians:

There was, under Noah, a cosmic and universal Flood over the whole Earth, and also many particular ones under various kings and in various regions.

The first Flood is affirmed by Masea, Phoenix, Berosus the Chaldean, Hieronymus and Manethon the Egyptians, and Moses the Hebrew.

That Flood, indeed, they call – by *antonomasia* – the Flood of the Earth, without qualification, because, as they say, it submerged all lands.

But there were also many provincial floods, which (because they occurred in particular places, and under particular kings) were named from the particular place, or from the particular king.

The first was the monthly Nile flood under the Egyptian Hercules and Prometheus.

This was called Niliac (of the Nile) because it happened by the inundation of the Nile in the region where Prometheus reigned.

It was, however, after the universal Flood, in the ninth year and five hundredth year (i.e., year 509), and of short duration, because it was monthly, and provincial, because it occurred in the region of the Nile under Prometheus.

But the Scamandrian flood happened in Attica, the region of Greece where Athens is, when Ogyges reigned there – hence called Actic (Attic, from Actica).

This was after the Nile flood, as Berosus and Eusebius say, in the forty-fourth year. This was particular by location, because it was Actic, and under King Ogyges. It was of short duration, because it lasted two months; and it was large in region, because (as Diodorus Siculus describes in his sixth book) it flooded all the islands of the Hellespont and the coasts of Asia nearby.

The third was the Thessalian flood under Deucalion, in his eighty-second year. Its duration was three months, and it happened in winter. It was provincial, because it was in the Hellenic region, as Aristotle says.

Juvenal also mentions this when he says:

"*From the time that Deucalion, as the rains covered the sea,*

Climbed the mountain by boat and sought the lots,

And gradually warm breath stirred the soft stones,

And Pyrrha showed the girls naked to the men."

The fourth flood – notable among authors – was the Pharonic or Alexandrian flood in Egypt, where now is Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great. Once it was the island of Pharos, inhabited by Pharonic colonists. An inundation occurred in the time of the prophet Prometheus, to whom Paris, having seized Helen, first sailed, as Xenophon and Herodotus write, in the second book of their *Histories*.

This inundation is seen to have taken place around the time of the destruction of Troy, concerning which Lucan (in his final book) says:

"Then the sea's barrier began – Pharos was once an island,

standing in the midst of the sea in the time of Proteus's children;

but now it is a coast nearest the sea."

Philosophers and historians alike, both pagan and Christian, concede this. Chiefly the Christian historians, and a few of the pagans.

It will later be debated whether a flood can occur from natural causes, or from the sun by divine power.

As for a universal conflagration, neither the saints nor the faithful historians have asserted that one has ever existed, but only some of the most ancient philosophers, who claim that the world is generated and destroyed by flood and by drying out, as is said by Diogenes and Anaximenes. These philosophers hand down that the whole earth was once flooded, and that the human race was destroyed; then the earth dried out, and animals arose from the rotting matter.

Euripides and Plato seem to have shared this opinion.

But a particular conflagration occurred under Phaethon, as both Aristotle and Plato and others affirm.

Whether a universal conflagration can occur by natural causes will be debated later.

Chapter Nine

Third supposition: Assuming the eternity of the world, there have been infinite particular floods, and likewise infinite conflagrations; but if the eternity of the world is denied, it is reasonable that there have been several floods and conflagrations.

It is not difficult to deduce, assuming the eternity of the world, as the Peripatetics affirm, that particular floods and conflagrations have occurred infinitely.

This is what Alexander of Aphrodisias deduces in his commentary on the *Meteorology* from the things Aristotle says: for the moist and the dry can be derived either from the motion of the Sun, or from the motions of the other stars, which happen with the Sun.

If they are derived from the motion of the Sun, since that is always equal the moist and the dry will also always be equal: for as much as the Sun diminishes by approach, so much it increases by recession.

If they are derived from the other stars, those stars can be configured both with themselves and with the Sun in various ways. It happens that at one time they dry up the moist, at another they increase it.

This celestial configuration can last a long time. Without a doubt, in the course of time one arrangement will dry out all moisture; while in another time, with an opposite configuration emerging, moisture will accumulate, flooding the earth itself.

But since, according to the Peripatetics, the world is eternal, this change has occurred infinitely. Just as its causes have also succeeded one another infinitely.

But if the world is not eternal, as the Truth itself commands, it is both something we have deduced, and not discordant with reason, that multiple floods and conflagrations have

occurred. For it is not unreasonable if, in so great a time, the causes of those events return not just once.

Chapter Ten

Fourth supposition: If the world is perpetual, infinite floods and conflagrations will occur; but if it is not perpetual, there can be several.

It is therefore not contrary to reason, that there will be infinite floods and conflagrations, if the world is perpetual. Infinite causes will return in a circle, as Aristotle asserts in the fourth book of the *Physics*.

When the world is not perpetual, infinite causes will not return, but they will still return often. Therefore, nothing will prevent floods and conflagrations from often proceeding from them.

Chapter Eleven

The fifth supposition concerns the causes of particular cataclysms.

Therefore, all have asserted regional inundations.

On which account, one must treat the causes.

Aristotle, the true interpreter of nature, disregarding celestial causes, investigated only natural ones. Accordingly, he assigned the cause of a particular inundation to the excess of rains: when this occurs in any region, it must be inundated.

He also asserts as a second cause the abyss, that is, a great quantity of water under the earth. When much water arises under the earth, that water, having accumulated, breaks through the earth and eventually floods the region.

He asserts a third cause to be an earthquake. When over several days an earthquake occurs in some region, it can happen that the sources of large rivers or springs, which originate in some region, are obstructed. New caverns are formed, which, once filled and agitated by the shaking of the earth, eventually open; and when they open, the whole region will be inundated.

A fourth cause is the opposing blasts of different winds. By the opposition of winds a great mass of sea water can be accumulated, which finally, when the land-blowing wind is overcome, will flood the region – just as happened in Achaia, as Aristotle attests.

These are the causes drawn from sublunar things, which Aristotle assigned as the best meteorologist.

Albertus Magnus, however, combined sublunar causes with celestial ones. He affirms that the inundation of the earth happens from an increase of the sea caused by a celestial influence. In the book he wrote on the properties of the elements, he asserts that the sea is increased by the moon herself (though not always, but especially when she has been strong over the waters).

He asserts that the moon becomes strong over the waters:

First, when she has increased in light;

Secondly, when the moon is nearest to increasing the sea, when she is simultaneously in the lowest parts of the eccentric and epicycle.

Thirdly, when the moon approaches the apex in the regions near the increasing sea. In our regions, when she has been in the north, and is placed in northern signs.

Fourthly, when the moon has been strong over the excess of rains. When she is in watery signs, in Pisces or the end of Aquarius, and with stars both fixed and wandering that increase water, such as those four stars near the Water-Pourer, or the Pleiades.

When these causes are present, the sea rises. The moon herself concurs and increases the sea to such a degree that it floods the region adjacent.

Peter of Auvergne, looking toward the celestial cause, derives from it the sublunar cause. He says that, just as a small annual winter happens due to the sun's elongation from us at a finite time, so by the circulation of the great stars, a great winter and an excess of rain occurs.

When (as he says) Saturn and Jupiter are in conjunction, and indeed changed from an airy triplicity into a watery one, and in a moist sign, as in Pisces, and with moist stars, namely with Venus and the Moon, which have the greatest power in moving moist things, if they are not hindered by Mars or the Sun they will portend no small excess of rain, which Aristotle calls a "great winter," in the region agreeing with the sign in which they are conjoined.

Thus far concerning the causes of regional inundations.

Chapter Twelve

The sixth supposition is that a cosmic and universal Flood, although it may not follow from secondary causes, can be subject to those causes by the power of God so providing and ordering.

A great question, however, is whether the universal Flood itself, which we call *cosmic*, arose by the powers of secondary causes.

Anaximander, Diogenes, and Anaximenes, asserting that the world comes into being and perishes, say the whole earth has at some point been inundated by that universal Flood.

This opinion was approved by Euripides and Plato, and Avicenna. The mathematicians [astrologers] investigated its cause from the heavens.

Albertus Magnus, however, says that a cosmic Flood occurs when all sublunar causes, together with celestial ones, agree in all things for an inundation. The mathematicians try to prove this view from the fact that some particular force of the heavens, effective in producing waters, can cause a particular flood in some region. Therefore, a twofold force of the heavens, effective over double the amount of water, could cause it in a twofold region of the earth. Thus, a threefold force could cause a flood in a threefold region.

The whole force of the heavens, with no other function than to produce waters, could cause it in the whole earth.

But this whole force of the heavens, with no other function than to produce waters, Albumasar places in the great conjunctions when they occur in watery signs, the triplicity having been altered. He deems the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the part of Cancer, which preceded the Flood of Noah by (according to him) 287 years, or, as Haomar says, 279 years, to be a sufficient cause of Noah's Flood.

This cause Peter of Auvergne assigns to a *particular* flood.

Others, however, say that the entire cause lies in the sevenfold or sixfold conjunctions of the planets, for example when Saturn and Jupiter, being retrograde and with altered triplicity are conjoined in watery signs near the Hydra of Aquarius, with the Moon also in watery signs, either conjoined with watery stars or configured with them, and placed properly as ruler of the Ascendant.

This configuration of the heavens has no other function than to produce waters.

Therefore, when it occurs, they say a Flood happens across the whole earth.

Hence Henry Bate of Mechelen, the distinguished student of the great Albertus Magnus, says in his commentaries on Albumasar's *On the Great Conjunctions*:

"In the final tables drawn up at Mechelen I found signs indicating an annual flood, and indeed in the year 3382 before the Incarnation of the Lord."

For in that year, through the conjunction of Jupiter with Saturn, Henry discovered a change of triplicity around the fifth degree of Cancer in the month of June; and this according to the ordered motions of the ninth sphere, by reason of which also the image of a ship, which could signify Noah's Ark, was directly in the place of that conjunction.

Whence Henry concludes: this conjunction, because of the change of triplicity, which pertained to watery signs, and especially to the sign of the world, namely Cancer, could not without cause signify a universal Flood.

Furthermore, the same author says:

"I also discovered a wondrous pattern of conjunction near the end of the seventh month, where Saturn and Jupiter were conjoined near the beginning of the fourth degree of Leo. They immediately proceeded, until Jupiter reached the ninth degree of Leo, and Saturn the third; and there was their station. But afterwards both went retrograde, so that in the following year, when the Sun was entering Aries, 3381 years before the Incarnation of the Lord, by retrogradation they were conjoined near the twenty-eighth degree of Cancer, and a few days later their station occurred. Finally, they began to move directly. And thus for more than a year they remained within the limits of that conjunction."

By this reasoning, Henry concludes that similar conjunctions, whenever they happen, always portend a Flood.

Now that celestial event, which was believed by astronomers to portend a flood, Alvernus [William of Auvergne] briefly collected in *On Meteors*.

He says: when Saturn and Jupiter, having shifted from the airy triplicity to the watery, are again conjoined in a watery sign, such as Pisces, and with them are present other moist stars, namely Venus and the Moon, which possess especially strong power in moving moist things, and are not notably hindered by the Sun or Mars, they produce an excessive amount of rain, which Aristotle calls a great winter.

This opinion is supported by the fact that some power of the heavens can occur capable of altering the whole world toward disease. Some power of the heavens once caused a certain universal disease, by which nearly the entire human race was afflicted – the French disease [syphilis]. This afflicted kings, popes, religious, citizens, rich, poor, and all peoples without distinction. This disease arose from that conjunction of Saturn and Mars in the decan of Pisces, on the 3rd of January, 1496. It is also said that such a thing once happened in the world in the year of the world 2436.

This French disease, which in our own time has emerged universally, seems to be a flood, and perhaps no less than that which was under Noah – except that the former overwhelmed the whole human race with waters, whereas this disease does so through the complication of endless sickness. Furthermore, plague has sometimes seized the entire world – like that which began in the month of January, 1348.

The plague which Hippocrates writes of in the book *Epidemics* as having occurred in Thrace and Palestine was great, but provincial. That which Galen in his commentary on the same book describes in Rome was likewise very severe, but provincial. That too which happened in Rome in the time of Pope Gregory I was also very great, but afflicted only the provincials. But that which began in 1348 was *cosmic*, occupying the whole world, and most severe. Scarcely a fourth part of the nations remained. It arose, moreover, in the whole world from the conjunction of the three superior planets, Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars, which preceded the plague in the year 1345, on the 24th day of March, in the 14th degree of Aquarius.

Therefore, if there is any power in the stars that can generally alter the whole world toward disease, there can be some power in the stars which can occupy the entire earth with waters. The reasoning is no greater in the one case than in the other.

Moreover, the power of the heavens can favour a particular people, so that that people rule the whole world. The Romans almost ruled the whole world, and indeed by celestial

power alone. Therefore, some power of the heavens can so favour the waters that they occupy the whole earth. The power of the Romans began from a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Capricorn, occurring in the year from the Flood 2006. This signified the first kings of the Romans.

From these things, great mathematicians [astrologers] believe a cataclysm has arisen from secondary causes. Nor is it unreasonable: for a Flood, however great and universal, is an elemental thing. But it is established that all sublunar things and whatever is elemental are subject to the stars.

Aristotle argues against these things in the *Meteorology*. He says that droughts and rains are particular, just as earthquakes are. If a universal Flood exists, it cannot occur unless there is an excess of rain over the whole earth. But it is certain that neither the Sun nor any other configuration of the stars can have equal power over the whole earth. Otherwise, every effect arising from the stars, when it occurred in one region, would be seen to occur in all.

We ourselves have observed more than once that configuration of the heavens has not universally caused plague in every region. Indeed, from a condition of the heavens, we have seen one country almost completely invaded by plague, while another has escaped unharmed. We have seen from the state of the heavens that Italy was troubled by wars, but in Spain and France peace prevailed.

Therefore, since not every part of the heavens looks equally upon every region, it follows that no configuration of the heavens has equal power over the whole earth.

Moreover, a universal Flood cannot happen unless clouds gather above the whole earth. But under the torrid zone, or between the tropics, clouds never gather, as observation shows.

An excess of rain cannot occur unless the Sun is absent from that region in which it happens. But since the whole earth cannot ever be without the Sun, some region is always under its power. Thus there cannot be a universal Flood.

Moreover, the universal generation of mixed bodies by natural causes cannot fail. This occurs in the contact of the three elements: namely Earth, Air, and Water, as Aristotle proves in *On Generation and Corruption*.

No force of the heavens regards the entire earth equally; for whether the heavens are divided by *climes* or by *triplicities*, no force of the heavens can exist equally over the whole earth. It does not extend beyond the regions subject to the signs of the relevant triplicity, nor beyond the regions subject to the diameters or quadratures of the relevant sign, as Ptolemy says. Therefore it cannot be equal in all lands. It is therefore clear from these points that a universal Flood cannot arise from secondary causes.

The reasoning introduced by the mathematicians [astrologers] seems frivolous. The first is refuted thus: although there may be some total power for producing waters, it cannot be equal over the whole earth. Rather, it will only look towards those regions that agree with the sign in which it occurs, and with the same diameter and quadratures, as Ptolemy teaches.

As for the argument from diseases, it is frivolous: first, because there has never been such a universal one that men did not survive; further, a disease infects by contagion, therefore once it begins, it can infect the whole world by contagion. But a flood cannot spread by contagion.

The Empire of the Romans was not universal, since many peoples escaped. An Empire is increased by contagion, but a flood occurs because of an excess of rains.

From these points it follows that a cosmic Flood over the whole earth – namely, both the habitable and the uninhabitable – is purely supernatural. When the Sun approaches the

antipodes, a flood does not occur equally among us and among them; nor conversely. They have other stars, other divisions of the stars, and ultimately another astronomy.

If it were to happen equally for us and for them, it would not happen equally in the regions subject to the torrid zone. Indeed, Aristotle asserts that to those who border the torrid zone, or who are between the tropics, a flood has never come. Hence Plato in the *Timaeus* brings in those people saying that the Greeks are always children, and they themselves always old men. They say this for no other reason than that a Flood has never reached them.

Therefore the Noachian Flood, since it was over the whole earth, was entirely supernatural. It follows that, although a universal Flood does not exist from secondary causes in themselves, if those causes are strengthened and affected by divine power, it can be maintained that the Flood is subject to them. God can make a Flood and every other thing without secondary causes. He can also make great effects, which in themselves are not subject to secondary causes, insofar as they are strengthened and affected by divine power.

This destroys Aristotle's first argument: although above the whole earth no star has by its own power an equal force, by God's power, above all that, that star can have power wherever God wills. The second argument is also struck down. The clouds cannot be gathered over the whole earth by the power of the stars in themselves, nevertheless by God's power the stars can gather them everywhere. The third is entirely solved: an excess of rains can occur everywhere, with the Sun present or absent, if not by the power of the stars, then at least according to the judgement of divine will. The fourth is resolved. Things mixed from rotten matter are not able to be generated; such things were and could have been in the Ark by the decision of the divine will. The fifth is refuted. No power of the heavens by its own virtue regards the whole earth, but it can nonetheless regard as much as God wills.

So far concerning the watery flood.

Chapter Thirteen

Seventh supposition. Multiple provincial conflagrations, and concerning their causes.

So much concerning the Flood. Now we shall discuss the conflagration, starting with the provincial variety. For it has been proven that such a thing has sometimes occurred.

Some have thought that by the power of the heavens fire could descend to us, from its own sphere, in great mass, and burn some region of the earth. Just as nothing in the power of the heavens prevents some lump of fire descending to the region of the air, so that it may there be destroyed, nothing prevents, by a stronger heavenly power, a great lump of fire descending all the way to the earth and burning some region of the earth.

This burning of a region will therefore be a conflagration, and of this sort, occurring by the power of the heavens. This position we have refuted in the books *On Meteors*. Fire naturally cannot descend unless, by some cooling constellation, it becomes heavy. But when it becomes heavy, it passes into the element nearest to it, and is destroyed.

Others have said a conflagration of this kind is made from inflamed exhalations. When driven from the middle region of the air down to us, these have sometimes burned a region, which they have called a conflagration. This position Aristotle refuted, from the fact that such flames cannot gather in such quantity as to burn a region. In addition, all these arise from thick vapour, which is easily converted into the air next to it.

Others argue a conflagration to be the drying out of some region, which follows upon an inundation. For when there is some excess of rains in some region, in the same region sometimes there will occur a complete drying out. The Peripatetics call this a conflagration. The mathematicians say the cause of this happens from the appearance of comets.

The physicists interpret Phaethon as a great and terrible comet. In his time, they say there was so great a drought and heat of the Sun that trees and crops withered, and rivers

almost dried out. This intense heat of the Sun was supposedly caused by a conflagration from Phaethon.

Concerning the story of Phaethon, Ovid speaks sufficiently in the book *Metamorphoses*.

Concerning the causes of a comet, Albumasar, in the book *On the Great Conjunctions*, asserts that a comet appears in a year where there is both the conjunction of the three superiors [Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars] and Mars is the ruler of the year.

Moreover, he says a comet appears in a year where Mars is the ruler of the year, whether or not there is a conjunction of the superiors, provided Mars has been in body or by rays in airy or earthy signs; and the Moon is badly placed in an airy sign; but especially when Mars is the ruler of that sign which Jupiter holds at the beginning of that same year.

And in that book which Albumasar composed *On Flowers*, he says Mars makes a comet, when, in annual revolutions, Mars is either conjoined or opposed to Saturn. Especially when the tail of the Dragon has been conjoined with Saturn, or has assailed him in hostile fashion.

Ptolemy, the prince of the astronomers, in the book *Apotelesmata*, thinks a comet proceeds from eclipses of the luminaries. Especially when either Mars or Mercury is ruler of the ecliptic sign – which we observed in the year 1506, on the 2nd day of August.

Aristotle, in the *Meteorology*, says winds come to be at the time of eclipses, which are of the nature of comets.

Sometimes, without any comet being seen, a great heat of the Sun and great dryness and burning on the earth have been observed. This is no less called a conflagration by the Peripatetics. The mathematicians [astrologers] assign as the cause the greater conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in fiery signs, when Mars is joined to them, and moist stars have not hindered; or an eclipse of the Sun, when it has been in Aries.

So much concerning provincial conflagration.

Chapter Fourteen

The eighth supposition: A universal and cosmic conflagration is not subject to the powers of secondary causes. God, without them, can bring it about in the universe. It is also discussed whether it is of the sun, and what its cause may be.

So much for provincial conflagration. Now let us discuss the cosmic and universal.

Anaximander, Diogenes, and Anaximenes, judging conflagration to be the drying-out of the whole earth, said the entire earth is first dried out in a certain natural period, then flooded in turn. Indeed by a universal cataclysm it is flooded, but afterwards by the heat of the Sun and stars more and more dried out. An infinite process, inasmuch as causes contrary to each other succeed one another infinitely, assuming the eternity of the motion of the heavens.

St Thomas Aquinas, a most learned man, in his *Summa Theologica*, explains cosmic conflagration as the universal burning of the whole world, which happens when the whole world is consumed by flames.

Concerning the cause of this, not all think the same way. Plato in the *Timaeus* asserts the cause to be the deviation of the Sun and the stars from their course, just as the poets tell the fable about Phaethon.

The poets say the cause is Atlas, who, when he sends the axis downwards, brings about the universal conflagration. When he sends the axis upwards, he causes the universal cataclysm. But these opinions are fabulous nonsense.

Some say the universal conflagration happens when fire descends from its sphere to the whole earth.

It descends when in all the whole earth, in equal proportion, all combustible things are equally ready to burn. That is, they are most strongly and most powerfully dried out. When earthly combustible things are thus ready to burn, fire descending from its own sphere with the great fullness of itself immediately ignites them, and so burns the whole.

Others assert the fire does not descend, but that when all combustible things of this world are so dried out as to be most apt for burning, they say that fire is kindled when the solar rays are gathered together in some place of the earth. As with the concavity of a mirror. With the fire thus kindled, all the combustible things most apt for burning will be burned universally over the whole earth.

Albertus Magnus, in his book on the properties of the elements, does not doubt that universal conflagration can happen over the whole earth. He even maintains that it is contained within the powers of secondary causes. He affirms that it occurs when six conditions come together:

First, when the Sun, Jupiter, and Mars are conjoined in Cancer.

Second, when this conjunction falls between the image of Cancer and the heart of Leo [Regulus].

Third, when all of them are placed in the lower parts of their orbits.

Fourth, when they are not hindered by the cold stars: Saturn, Venus, and the Moon.

Fifth, that this conjunction be with Saturn and Jupiter conjoined through a change of triplicity.

Sixth, that the cold stars be in the highest pivots of their orbits.

When these six come together in the heavens, Albertus thinks a universal conflagration takes place. Because it happens very rarely, the ancients called such a celestial state a long deviation of the stars.

If you ask in what way, this state of the heavens being assumed, the conflagration will happen, Albertus does not explain.

There is no small question whether it happens through the descent of fire from its own sphere, by the generation of new fires, or through a universal drying-up. Perhaps Albertus would have said that this conflagration happens inasmuch as, on account of such a state of the heavens, all earthly combustible things, because of excessive dryness, are most powerfully prepared for burning. Afterwards, when the rays of the Sun come together in some place where the combustibles are more ready, fire will be generated, and thus, once the burning has begun, the burning will spread to the rest. Just as when a blaze arises in certain stalks, it migrates to all the others. Behold how a universal conflagration can be subject to the powers of secondary causes, as the great Albertus advises in natural philosophy.

But, if I may speak to a peace-loving philosopher, I would say this cause is a fictitious fabrication, since neither Albertus nor anyone else has observed it.

If from such a disposition of the heavens the universal conflagration itself were to occur, the truth of the future conflagration could be known to astronomers. This has been rejected equally by the Saints and by philosophers.

Moreover, even granting that such a state of the heavens could happen at some time, it would never be equal for the whole earth, as we said earlier according to the precept of Ptolemy. What would such a state of the heavens do in the poles and in regions close to the poles? Could it burn places where there are perpetual frosts?

For this reason, blessed Thomas, no less a philosopher than a theologian, thinks conflagration happens when all things on the face of the earth are burned up. They are burned up when all celestial and sublunary causes which can produce fire on earth come together at one time. But since this coming together does not happen in the natural course, Thomas therefore affirms that the universal conflagration of the earth happens by divine power alone.

That natural power cannot gather together all these causes is immediately clear. Natural power acts in a determined place and time and in a determined manner.

Just as there is no cause that can naturally make a Flood over the whole earth, so too there is no natural cause that will make a universal conflagration. Wherefore, it must be believed that both happen solely by divine power.

Chapter Fifteen

From which configuration of the heavens, according to the more probable astronomy of Ptolemy, a provincial flood and a provincial conflagration occur.

It is clear from these suppositions that neither a universal Flood nor a universal conflagration is subject to the stars, but only provincial ones. Therefore, let us explain those configurations of the heavens that produce these effects, according to the more probable astronomy of Ptolemy.

The causes cannot be simply a conjunction of planets by itself. This is evident from what we have said. For the conjunction of planets is weak, if it is not strengthened by the power of an eclipse. Just as the action of a military commander is small unless strengthened by the power of a king.

The Sun and Moon are like kings; but the planets like ministers, as we said in the book *On the Causes of Our Calamities*, chapter four.

If the conjunction of the superior planets [Saturn, Jupiter, Mars] occurs in watery signs, and is somehow strengthened by other stars, whether fixed or wandering, they may cause some excess of water. Nevertheless, they will never cause such an excess as to be called a flood, unless they are corroborated by eclipses.

By this reasoning, a flood should never be predicted unless first there is an eclipse portending an excess of rain. Afterwards, before the forces of the eclipse's significations have entirely abated, see if a superior conjunction follows in that eclipsed sign, or in some sign configured to it. This conjunction increases the forces of the eclipse.

If the forces of the prior eclipse are diminished, no flood should be predicted.

This rule is not at all discordant with the cause of the universal, since the resulting effect will be stronger and more powerful.

This rule Ptolemy explains very beautifully in the second *Apotelesmata*, and we also in the second book of *Our Calamities*.

According to the second rule in the same book, the quarterly conjunction [*trimestris coniunctio*] or opposition of the Sun and Moon signifies an excess of rain, whether eclipsed or not eclipsed. In the whole quarter of the year, one must observe conjunctions and oppositions, both of the luminaries [Sun and Moon] and of the other stars, whether planets or configurations. If it happens, a flood is to be predicted, although not as great as if some eclipse of the luminaries had preceded it.

This rule we clarified in our book *On the Causes of Our Calamities*.

By this reasoning a provincial flood is never to be predicted from other stars, unless through the powers of the luminaries, either simply configured or eclipsed.

According to Proclus and Aristotle, a particular cause does not act when the action of the primary cause is subtracted. Since the luminaries are the primary causes, the other stars are secondary. The other stars cannot effect anything great or small unless the action of the luminaries is supposed.

From this, the rules governing the causes of particular conflagrations are evident.

The conjunction of stars in fiery signs promises a small efficacy in drying, unless strengthened by preceding eclipses, or by quarterly conjunctions or oppositions of the Sun and Moon. Indeed, also the monthly ones.

Hence if anyone wishes to predict a provincial flood:

First, according to Ptolemy, he should note the eclipse;

Second, he should note the quarterly conjunctions or oppositions of the Sun and Moon within the time of the eclipse's significance;

Third, the monthly ones;

Lastly, if within these times planetary conjunctions have also occurred, those too should be carefully observed.

If all conspire in producing waters, Ptolemy will predict a flood.

But if they have disagreed and more powerful ones are of contrary significance, the prediction will omit the flood, but not the rain.

By similar reasoning, the same applies to conflagrations.

Chapter Sixteen

The widespread prediction of the future Flood is the result of ill-consideration. This is shown in many ways.

With the strengths of the prediction thus examined, it is nevertheless evident that the prediction of a future Flood is in many respects ill-considered.

First, the words of the author [Johannes Stöffler] — whence the common people took this — imply the coming Flood will be more than cosmic. That author says the change arising from the conjunction will be as we have scarcely perceived in many centuries, one on a scale unknown to the writings of historians or natural philosophers.

This shows that the publicised flood will be either cosmic or more than cosmic. But we have shown a universal Flood cannot at all be subject to the powers of secondary causes.

Those who make this prediction from that single conjunction of the stars say they are supported by natural arguments, or by the observations of the ancients. But they cannot appeal to the observations of the ancients. There never has been a conjunction of so many stars, as the author asserts, noted in the tables by astronomers or by natural philosophers of yore. Therefore, past observation cannot predict what follows from that conjunction.

Nor, indeed, can natural arguments. For we have deduced by natural reasoning that a universal Flood is in no way subject to secondary causes.

Furthermore, no conjunction of stars can foretell a particular or universal Flood if Mars is present. In this conjunction Mars is present; therefore it prevents it. Moreover, if astrologers wish the flood to be provincial, they do not specify the region where the future flood will threaten. Nor will they be able to specify it.

In addition, concerning the timing of such a flood, they determine nothing. Nor can there be agreement among them. For the conjunction that preceded the Noachian Flood did not immediately bring it about. The Flood occurred either two hundred and seventy-nine or two hundred and eighty-seven years after the conjunction. Albumasar even asserts that the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, when it is changed to the watery triplicity, does not produce the effect except after six conjunctions. That is, not until after one hundred and twenty years.

It follows that the middle conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, which in our times changes to the Pisces triplicity, does not promise a flood. We will not therefore fear it.

Moreover, there are two stars which prevent a flood, as Albertus Magnus says in his book on the properties of the elements: namely, the Sun and Mars. Either the Sun or Mars is

present in this conjunction; they either eliminate the flood entirely, or allow only a small excess of rain.

Moreover, the public prediction of a future Flood is ill-considered because it does not observe Ptolemy's rules. In predicting the Flood the star-gazers look only at the conjunction, and do not consider the preceding eclipse, nor the preceding quarterly conjunction, nor the monthly conjunction. Yet Ptolemy always says these must be observed first.

Finally, this pronouncement is altogether ill-considered because the astrologers have not observed what kind the conjunction is — whether it is partile in both longitude and latitude, or only partile in longitude. This conjunction of the stars is only partile in longitude, which removes not a little of the power.

That the publicised prediction of a Flood is in many respects ill-considered is evident from these things.

Chapter Seventeen

We further weaken the astronomical arguments for the prediction of a future Flood.

With these points thus explained, we can easily refute the astronomical arguments set forth in the first book – those in favour of that publicised fiction of a future Flood.

First: although a flood is a very great effect, the conjunction of the stars is not a very great cause, unless it be strengthened by some eclipse, or at least by the conjunction or opposition of the Sun and Moon. Those who look only to the conjunction of the stars are in error. For whether that conjunction be in the head of Aries, or changing triplicity, or an aspect of two or more planets, it will always be weak unless invigorated either by an eclipse or by the opposition or conjunction of the Sun and Moon.

The second argument is also dealt with. Although planetary conjunctions are causes of generation and corruption, and never have so many occurred at the same time, they ought not on that account to be regarded as the greatest cause, unless (as we have said) they be increased by the luminaries.

The third is also frivolous. Although the conjunction will be in a watery sign, it is greatly hindered by the presence of the Sun and Mars. Conjunctions are not to be regarded as the greatest unless they be reinforced by the powers of the luminaries.

The fourth seems to me a fictitious argument. They suppose the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, which preceded in Cancer, was the cause of the Flood of Noah. I think this false and fictitious. Before that Flood came many other arrangements of stars. I do not see why it should be attributed more to the conjunction which preceded it by so many years than to the many other conjunctions that followed that one. Especially since the powers of conjunctions are weak unless strengthened by the luminaries.

As for the authority of those who say the conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter in watery signs signify waters, this must be understood as meaning if Saturn and Jupiter are unhindered by Mars or the Sun, and also if they are reinforced by the powers of the luminaries.

The fifth argument has been refuted already. The conjunctions of the stars do not promise an excess of rain unless they be confirmed by eclipses.

From these points one may deduce that the common opinion is frivolous, unless we confirm it by other arguments or rules.

Chapter Eighteen

We reject an interpretation of the words of the author of the Ephemerides.

Some interpret the words of the author of the *Ephemerides* [Johannes Stöffler], and assert they refer not to a Flood, but to an alteration and a universal change of the realm. The author himself says that the conjunction signifies to all an undoubted change, variation, and alteration. He did not necessarily posit a flood or a conflagration.

This interpretation is supported by Ptolemy's assertion in the second book of the *Apotelesmata*, and our own in the first book of *On the Causes of Our Calamities.* Ptolemy says when the conjunction is in those signs which are bicorporeal [mutable] it portends effects in matters pertaining to subjects and kings. The change is one brought by kings towards their subjects. Pisces is a bicorporeal sign; whence from this conjunction it is promised there will be a king who will change the whole world, whether by laws, or institutions, or force, or love; or who will break the priests and in some measure restrain sacred rites.

Of this opinion was Lorenzo Bonincontri of Miniato. In that book he first composed on the celestial matter to King Ferdinand, he says:

"But those things are already about to come in our own years. A better one of our law will scarcely break a few such things, things too harsh for sacred rites and too hard to sow — and he will give an innocent king who will bring the world order to its end."

Perhaps this change will be promised by the meeting of so many stars.

But this interpretation is neither according to the mind of the author nor does it keep the precepts of Ptolemy. The author promises from such a conjunction an undoubted change to almost the whole world in its climates, kingdoms, provinces, ranks, dignities, brute beasts, sea creatures, and all things born of the earth. This cannot be brought about by the arrival of a new king. A king can change laws, men, and all things that are of man; but in what way he could change sea creatures, land beasts, and things born of the earth, I do not see. Unless he were to be a new prophet who would change all things by a nod, which is false.

Moreover, in the second book of the *Apotelesmata*, Ptolemy says when the conjunction happens in animal signs more placed toward the south, it portends unforeseen fluctuations of the air. We explained this in the book *On the Causes of Our Calamities.*

Pisces inclines more towards the south. Thus the conjunction in it will promise sudden fluctuations of the air. In that same book Ptolemy says: in aquatic signs, as in Aquarius and Pisces, a conjunction will also bring about its effects in things pertaining to rivers and springs.

From the sign in which the conjunction will be, it promises an effect in watery matters.

Thus far, concerning the rejection of the prediction of a future Flood.

Book Three

Chapter One

How many things must be taken into consideration. We say something about the significations of the conjunction.

Therefore, if we wish to say anything about the significations of the conjunction, we must first consider the eclipse which will take place in Pisces in the year 1523, on 25th August, at almost the fifteenth hour. For the conjunction which will occur in the year 1524, in the month of February, will take place in the same sign as the eclipse — indeed, with the significations of that eclipse not yet abated, nay, perhaps not yet begun.

In the second place, we must consider the quarterly conjunction of the Sun and Moon preceding the Sun's entry into the first point of Capricorn, in the year 1523, on the 6th day of December, at about the 15th hour, 8 minutes, in about the 24th degree of Sagittarius. Under this quarterly conjunction, the conjunction of the stars in 1524 will occur in Pisces.

In the third place, the monthly conjunction of the Sun and Moon must be considered, which will occur in the year 1524, on the 5th day of January, at the 8th hour and 17 minutes. Under this monthly conjunction will occur the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Pisces.

In the fourth place, the monthly conjunction of the Sun and Moon must be considered, which will occur in the year 1524, on the 4th day of February, at the 2nd hour and 47 minutes. Under this will occur the other conjunctions of the stars which are to take place in Pisces.

Unless these are considered, we can say nothing about the significations of the stars which will come together in that sign.

Chapter Two

The meeting of so many stars, to occur in the month of February in the year 1524, without any other stars being taken into consideration: what it portends according to the precepts of Ptolemy.

These assumptions having been made, first let us say what (considering no other stars) the 1524 meeting of the stars determines, according to Ptolemy's precepts. Afterwards, let us say what it portends when all things necessary for that consideration have been taken into account. For thus, as far as it is permitted us to determine the future from astronomical matters, we will fully explain the whole meaning of the conjunction.

The whole force of the conjunction consists in the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, as will afterwards be made clear to those who wish to observe Ptolemy's precepts. For when the greater planets are conjoined, the other planets ought to be regarded more as witnesses than as primary agents.

Saturn and Jupiter are conjoined in the 9th degree of Pisces, where Jupiter himself is the more powerful (he has in it his domicile and terms, while Saturn has nothing). Therefore it must be pronounced according to Jupiter's nature, as Ptolemy commands. Moreover, Venus is bodily positioned there, and in that sign she holds the rights of exaltation; therefore she contributes not a little from her effects. Mars, too, bodily influences that place; therefore it is necessary to produce a mixed signification.

From Jupiter's own nature, a temperate state of the air is determined. For when Jupiter is lord, he promises healthful winds and beneficial ones; he foretells fruitful rains, quite productive for trees, crops, and for generating fruits.

Since the air will be temperate, the winds that occur will be milder; safe and well-harboured voyages will be indicated; the courses of rivers will be moderate and will keep themselves within their banks without damage to neighbouring fields.

Venus, mingled by jurisdiction and by presence, makes that meeting portend rains, life-giving showers, and fertility; health-bringing winds, calm fair weather, smooth voyages, and the transport of goods with safety and profit; a plentiful abundance of river and spring waters.

Mars, who is bodily mingled, determines a hot condition, with the result that he greatly diminishes the moistness of Venus. He adds to the significations of Jupiter and Venus great winds, many thunderclaps, floods of rivers, frequent flashes of lightning, dreadful thunderbolts, stormy and harmful rains. These things it portends will last for many days before and after the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, because of the slowness of those planets – for they separate slowly indeed.

These significations will be universal for almost the whole of the Northern world, inasmuch as that meeting inclines to the south, as Ptolemy says.

Chapter Three

What that conjunction portends by the part of the year in which it occurs.

Should anyone wish to consider other things, he will find a small signification derived from the stars becomes great, when the part of the year attests it. For if it is summer, and the stars portend a small dryness in summer, it will be not small when summer comes. Since the conjunction occurs in winter, which (as has been seen) portends waters, it decrees a rainy winter in the usual manner.

Therefore, from the part of the year, the conjunction foretells an excess of waters.

Chapter Four

Given the eclipse preceding the conjunction, what the conjunction may foretell.

From the very nature of the future conjunction, its significations lie in waters. From its arrangement, this signification is increased not a little.

But since we said these conjunctions are very weak and feeble unless they are supported by the power of eclipses, we ought to consider the lunar eclipse that precedes it by about five months.

That eclipse seems have signification in some part in waters: it is at the 10th degree of Pisces. Therefore, it foretells its effects in rivers and fountains, as the author Ptolemy states. Also, Jupiter, who principally holds rights in that eclipse, predicts fertile rains – sufficiently fertile for the trees, crops, and the generation of fruits. Venus favours this signification. She assumes part of dominion in the eclipse. Since she has authority either wholly or in some part in the eclipse, she foretells rains and abundant fertility of river waters and springs. But Mars, showing a great part of dominion in that eclipse, diminishes a large part of the signification; and adds thunder and lightning because of his innate dryness.

Taking this from the eclipse, the conjunction seems to increase its significations in waters even further. Moreover, this kind of eclipse promises significations in its three variations: in its beginning, in its middle, and in its end. In all, the significators are Jupiter, Mars, and Venus. Thus from this eclipse we have an increase in waters, rather than a decrease.

Chapter Five

What the conjunctions of the Sun and Moon signify about the conjunction of the stars.

Observing the conjunctions of the Sun and Moon, the quarterly one will be on 6th December, 1523, at about 15 hours 8 minutes at the meridian of Toledo: one will find not much that foretells excessive waters.

For in that one the first ruler is Jupiter, who promises fertile waters, especially since that Synod of the Moon [lunar month] flows from Venus to Jupiter. But Saturn, who claims a part of authority, predicts terrible disturbances in the air, turbid and cloudy mists, and unlucky fogs. Therefore, from such a conjunction we find not much abundance in waters.

Still less indication is given by the monthly conjunction of the Sun and Moon, which will happen in Capricorn on 5th January, 1524, at about 6 hours 55 minutes.

For in that one the first leader is Mars, who offers much dryness. It decrees thunder and lightning. But because the Moon, when it leaves the Sun, passes to Venus, that conjunction does not promise nothing watery.

However, the conjunction of the Sun and Moon in Aquarius on the 4th of February 1524 at hour 1, minute 25, exerts its significations in waters.

For Jupiter is ruler; Venus has great authority; Mercury is a participant, and indeed a morning one. Therefore, on all sides, that conjunction shows excess in waters. Which results in the significations of the conjunction increasing.

These are things which, considered separately, relate to the conjunction.

Chapter Six

The present author's conclusions concerning the flood, according to Ptolemy's precepts.

Having carefully considered these things, the conjunction of stars which will occur in Pisces can be considered in two ways.

First, it has relation with the preceding lunations, and by this reasoning it seems to increase in power. According to this reasoning, I judge that throughout all northern regions, the winter in which the conjunction will occur will be exceedingly rainy. From these things we have considered, even one little versed in mathematics can easily deduce this.

But if that conjunction is considered by itself, it is necessary first to consider the place its future significations indicate, to what regions the significations will extend, how long they will last, the type of subject where the significations will take effect, and the quality of those significations.

The place is the region that lies under Pisces. The stars do not affect every place, and every region. According to Ptolemy, the regions and cities which correspond to Pisces — where the conjunction will be — are Lydia, Cilicia, Pamphylia [in Asia Minor], Phazania [Fezzan], Nasamonia, and Garamantia [in Libya]. In those regions the conjunction will have significations. But if we want to observe Ptolemy's precepts, we must exclude from those significations Italy, France, Lombardy, Sicily, Apulia, and those regions subject to Leo.

If we follow the interpretations of Paul of Alexandria, Porphyry, and Anonymous, we must not exclude all of Spain, nor Gallia Narbonensis [southern France], nor Etruria [central Italy]. For according to these interpretations, the stars not only signify the regions subject to the sign in which the stars are; but also the regions subject to the signs square to the same diameter.

Regarding the type of subject by which the significations of the conjunction will begin to appear, the difficulty is this: Albumasar asserts that the conjunction will be in watery signs, and after six conjunctions its events will come to pass. Hence the effects will be one hundred and twenty years after the conjunction. The conjunction which preceded the Flood in

Cancer supposedly had its effect two hundred and seventy-nine or two hundred and eighty-seven years afterwards. The Arab interpreter of Ptolemy [Haly Avenrodan] in the book on the *Centiloquium*(?) says:

"When you know the Ascendant of the year, look at the sign of the conjunction. Count how many signs are between them, and how many parts of signs, and assign to each sign a year, and to each part a proportion; and then the event will be."

This is vain; for the more potent cause has its effect soon, not late. It ends late.

Since the conjunction portends its significations in the changes of air and water, in which the stars will soon act, the conjunction shall produce its effects over the whole winter, and for many days before and after.

The type of subject, according to Ptolemy, where the effects will appear, are aquatic and marine, river and fountain, and marine beasts, and fleets, and maritime cities, and swampy places and regions through which rivers flow.

From this it must not be asserted that a provincial flood will occur from the conjunction; albeit one not so vast as to completely invade the region, the peoples of the region, the stocks, and all the beasts. For the presence of the Sun and Mars removes not a little humidity, especially since it is not a fixed but a movable conjunction.

Aristotle calls every excess of rains by the Greek word *cataclysm*, whether it destroys peoples and beasts and tribes or not. Provided it exceeds the common measure of rains, it can be called a flood, as we have explained clearly in the books *On Meteors*.

What supports the case for a flood is that not long before us there were floods in Italy similar to this, in the year of salvation 570. The flood was so strong it submerged lower places with great destruction of peoples. Moreover, in the year 586, there was a huge flood around the Venetias and Liguria on the Kalends of October [1st October], and indeed with great thunder. After this, at Rome, a plague from the sea followed because of the foul serpents

flowing down to the shores. Furthermore, in the year 589, such was the force of the waters that a countless multitude of men and cattle perished. We observed a similar case in the year 1503, from the triple conjunction of the superiors [Jupiter, Saturn, Mars] in Cancer. The winter was exceedingly severe. Some distinguished men died and there were many shipwrecks; also the waters grew too much, yet no flooding of the region appeared anywhere.

These are the things necessary to say about the coming inundation which terrifies cities and peoples. We have not spoken rashly. If we have erred, it seems we have erred in the decrees of Ptolemy, the prince of all mathematicians. For although we have assigned little or nothing to astronomy (which we think probable), we have followed the doctrine of Ptolemy. Other things are much more physical, that is, more in accord with natural reason; the rest are mostly superstitions.

We cannot prove these things by our own or by others' observations (these things occur over long periods of time, and neither one nor many men are sufficient to observe), especially because of the complication of celestial causes. Nevertheless, it seems to us that we have sufficiently proved these things according to the learned decrees of Ptolemy.

If later men wish to say otherwise, let them say so. They themselves cannot argue from their own or from their predecessors' experiences, but speak only from a demon, or impulse, or chance. Since these things lie beyond the art, they are nothing to the craftsman – as we judge Ptolemy, the prince of mathematicians, to be.

Thus far concerning the flood.

THE END.

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